



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Jacksonville District

# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Corps of Engineers continues Lake Okeechobee pulse releases**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District will continue the second in a series of three 13-day pulse releases from Lake Okeechobee at 7 a.m., Apr. 9. Today's lake level, 14.75 feet NGVD, is 2.82 feet higher than a year ago today and 4.27 feet above the water level two years ago.

The Corps is reducing the target flow to the St. Lucie estuary through the St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80) to half of that of the previous release, and will not exceed 475 cubic feet per second (cfs). The target flow to the west, which is measured at the W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79), will continue at the same rate as in the previous pulse release. Releases to the west will not exceed an average flow of 2,200 cfs over the 13-day period.

The target flows for the release that begins tomorrow are much lower than the maximum flows allowed by the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS), which are 1,800 cfs to the east and 4,000 cfs to the west as measured at the Moore Haven Lock (S-77).

"We are trying to keep releases to the estuaries low, as requested, but we are becoming increasingly concerned about this unseasonably high lake level. Our ability to keep releases low may only be temporary," said Stu Appelbaum, Jacksonville District deputy for Restoration Program Management.

"We strive to keep the lake between 12.5 and 15.5 feet; the high end of that range is set due to concerns over possible erosion of the Herbert Hoover Dike. Given that we are entering the wet season, we are uncomfortably close to the high end of our management range. All it takes is one big rain event and the lake level can rise

dramatically,” he said.

The rate of release to the St. Lucie estuary was reduced by half in an attempt to reduce stress on that ecosystem. Salinity ranges dropped significantly during the last release, partly due to heavy local rainfall and basin runoff. Input from South Florida Water Management District ecologists and other experts indicate that a reduction in releases is needed.

“Along with our partners and a number of interested stakeholders, we are monitoring conditions in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries closely. While the Caloosahatchee Estuary has been adversely impacted, it appears that the St. Lucie badly needs a reduction in releases given the localized rainfall conditions and that this is a critical time for spawning oysters,” Appelbaum said.

The lake level is within the Operational Band of the 2008 LORS. Specifically, the lake is in the Low Sub-band and in accordance with the 2008 LORS, releases may be made up to 4,000 cfs (as measured at the Moore Haven Lock, S-77) and 1,800 cfs to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie, respectively.

The Corps is working closely with other agencies to continually monitor conditions in the lake and the estuaries. Conditions are wet throughout most of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades watershed, and if significant rainfall occurs, modifications to releases may be required. Modifications to lake releases will be coordinated with the South Florida Water Management District and other affected agencies, local governments and stakeholders.

A pulse-type release more closely resembles the naturally occurring pattern of runoff into the Caloosahatchee estuary caused by rain, which normally leads to an increase in flow as rain continues to fall, followed by a gradual decrease as runoff comes to an end. Water managers usually use these types of releases to help maintain conditions that are conducive to the sustainability of estuarine organisms. These releases also benefit the overall ecology of the area by promoting the mixing of salinity levels and nutrient concentrations from one water level to another.

For more information on water level data and flows for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project, visit the Corps’ water management page at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Engineering/Branches/WaterResources/WaterMgt/index.htm>. Questions and inquiries may be directed to Nanciann Regalado at 904.334.8954 (mobile) or [nanciann.e.regalado@usace.army.mil](mailto:nanciann.e.regalado@usace.army.mil).

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